

The Random Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle.

The tale of the Pendle Witches and how a nine-year-old girl would condemn her family to death

Demdike's granddaughters, Jennet Device

Once upon a time in the troubled land of Lancashire, there lived a young girl named Jennet Device. At the tender age of nine, Jennet was already accustomed to a life of hardship and uncertainty. She was an illegitimate child, born into a family plagued by poverty and whispered rumors. But little did she know that her actions would forever seal the fate of her own kin, becoming a dark chapter in history known as the Pendle witch trial.

Jennet resided with her mother, Elizabeth, her grandmother Demdike, her older sister Alizon, and her brother James in the shadow of the imposing Pendle hill. Their humble dwelling was situated in a village that had earned a notorious reputation as a haven for trouble-makers and subversives. The locals whispered about Demdike, who was deemed a "cunning woman" by the villagers, suggesting her involvement in occult practices.

In the year 1612, the winds of suspicion and fear blew over Lancashire, and the specter of witchcraft loomed large. The authorities, eager to quell the rising unrest, sought out individuals to blame. It was during these dark times that Jennet's life took a fateful turn. One day, the doors of justice swung open, and Jennet found herself standing before the court. Elizabeth, her mother, wailed at the sight of her daughter, but Jennet demanded her removal from the proceedings. Climbing onto a table with an eerie calmness that belied her young age, she accused her mother of practicing witchcraft. Her words resonated with the jury, and her convincing testimony sealed her family's fate.

After a two-day trial filled with testimonies, accusations, and a fervent belief in the supernatural, all of Jennet's family members, including her beloved grandmother Demdike, were pronounced guilty of causing death or harm through witchcraft. The echoes of the gavel were quickly replaced by the chilling sound of the gallows' creaking rope. The following day, Jennet's family and many of their neighbors were executed at Gallows Hill, their lives claimed by the hysteria of the times.

Time marched on, and the echoes of the Pendle witch trial began to fade. Yet, fate had a cruel twist in store for young Jennet Device. In the year 1633, two decades after the trial that had condemned her family, she found herself ensnared in a web of accusations once again. This time, a ten-year-old boy named Edmund Robinson accused Jennet and sixteen others of practicing witchcraft.

The accusations, although serious, faced a more skeptical England. The judges demanded physical evidence and scrutinized the claims carefully. Eventually, Edmund confessed that he had lied, influenced by the haunting tales of the infamous Pendle witch trial. The judges, displeased with the situation, referred the case to the Privy Council.

The last known record of Jennet Device was in 1636, where she seemed to vanish from the annals of history. The locals believed that she had married and sought refuge across the border in Yorkshire, far from the troubled land that had seen her childhood torn apart by fear and accusations.

Jennet's tale remains a haunting reminder of the dangers of misinformation, fear, and the devastating consequences that can arise from the words of a child. The legacy of

the Pendle witch trial lives on, a testament to the fragile nature of justice and the ease with which innocence can be lost in the face of hysteria.

By Donald Jay